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SUBJECT: SERBIA: CONGRESSMAN POMEROY PROMOTES SERBIA'S EU PATH AND
GROWING BILATERAL COOPERATION

Summary

1. (SBU) During his Feb 18-21 visit to Serbia, Representative Pomeroy expressed strong support for Serbia's EU integration and encouraged leaders to find a modus vivendi on Kosovo. In separate meetings, Prime Minister Cvetkovic, Deputy Prime Minister Djelic and Foreign Minister Jeremic, conveyed consistent messages in support of Serbia's EU aspirations but insisted Serbia would not give up on its diplomatic fight for Kosovo. Serbian officials also underscored their interest in deepening cooperation with the United States, including in the areas of law enforcement and scientific cooperation. National Assembly Speaker Djukic-Dejanovic encouraged greater interaction between the U.S. Congress and Serbia's National Assembly. During Congressman Pomeroy's return journey to the central Serbian city of Kraljevo, where he was an exchange student in 1973, media covered the long historic ties of friendship between the United States and Serbia. Pomeroy's visit highlighted opportunities for deepening bilateral relations beyond traditional government to government discussions. End Summary.

Prime Minister Cvetkovic: EU is Serbia's Goal

2. (SBU) Prime Minister Cvetkovic told Representative Pomeroy that EU integration is the key pillar of the government coalition and emphasized that Serbia's recent EU candidacy application demonstrated that Serbia's future is in the EU. Cvetkovic said that it would be difficult for Serbia to receive EU candidacy status in 2010, quoting a Serbian saying: "if you want something Friday, make a plan for Wednesday". Cvetkovic said Serbia was fully committed to complying with the Hague Tribunal and said that should not be an impediment to Serbia's EU aspirations.

3. (SBU) Cvetkovic identified three additional pillars of the governing coalition's policies: (1) openness to regional cooperation, (2) economic recovery, and (3) anti-corruption measures. Cvetkovic said that 2009 was a difficult year for Serbia economically, and expressed optimism the country would see modest growth in 2010. Cvetkovic highlighted unemployment as the most significant economic challenge, followed by the need to decrease public spending, notwithstanding public pressure to lift freezes on public salaries and pensions. Cvetkovic said Kosovo remained an additional priority for the government, but insisted that Serbia

would only use diplomacy and peaceful means to fight for Kosovo.

14. (SBU) Pomeroy congratulated Cvetkovic on Serbia's progress towards EU integration including the achievement of visa liberalization, the acceptance on the interim agreement on trade, and the submitting of Serbia's candidacy to the European Union. Pomeroy asked about WTO accession efforts, particularly in the agricultural arena. Cvetkovic said he was hopeful the WTO process would be successfully completed in the near future and called Serbia's non-WTO compliant GMO law "a technical issue that will be resolved shortly".

Deputy Prime Minister Djelic: Greater Cooperation

15. (SBU) Deputy Prime Minister Djelic told Pomeroy that after Vice-President Biden's visit to Serbia in May 2009, relations between the United States and Serbia had moved forward, but Djelic said relations could be deeper. Djelic said that Serbia was proving that it was a responsible and reliable partner, firmly on the path to EU integration. Djelic cited the GoS's recent efforts to improve regional cooperation and partnership such as: proposing

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a parliamentary resolution on Srebrenica, supporting the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and supporting the fight against organized crime, including coordinated efforts with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency.

16. (SBU) Djelic said that the status of Kosovo was a key issue on which the United States and Serbia disagreed, but said Serbia wanted to work with the United States on this issue. Djelic described Kosovo as "Serbia's Jerusalem" and said as a domestic political issue it would be impossible to compromise Serbia's position on Kosovo. Djelic acknowledged that Serbia could not, and did not want, to administer Kosovo directly, but also that Kosovo Serbs did not want to be administered from Pristina. Pomeroy reiterated the United State's support for Kosovo's independence and territorial integrity. Djelic said that international pressure on President Boris Tadic on the issue of Kosovo was unhelpful, as Serbian government leaders had to find a solution which would be politically palatable to the Serbian public.

17. (SBU) Djelic welcomed the progress which had been made towards completing a bilateral agreement on science and technology cooperation, said he planned to visit the United States in April, and hoped to visit research centers and sign the finalized agreement in Washington.

Foreign Minister Jeremic: EU and Kosovo

18. (SBU) Describing the situation in Serbia as "infinitely better" than just a few years ago, Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic told Pomeroy that the two national elections in 2008 were referenda that "calmed down our demons" and set Serbia on the path toward European integration. EU integration was Serbia's "central strategic priority," Jeremic said, adding that he was concerned that political and economic developments in the EU may slow the process of EU enlargement. Noting that the December 2009 Brammertz

report showed Serbia in compliance with its obligations toward The Hague Tribunal, Jeremic voiced confidence that Serbia's efforts would lead to the capture of Hague-indictees Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic.

¶9. (SBU) Responding to the Congressman's assertion that Kosovo status had been decided and that Serbia should focus on its EU accession, Jeremic asserted that Serbia could enter the EU without resolving Kosovo's status. Jeremic noted that both Cyprus and Ireland had joined the EU despite unresolved territorial disputes and said Serbia could not accept Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence because doing so would "open a precedent that would destabilize Serbia's other provinces." Jeremic urged Pomeroy to "recognize the realities" of international law and said that not all inhabitants of Kosovo wished to live under Pristina, echoing similar coordinated comments by the PM and Deputy PM. Jeremic emphasized that Serbia's Kosovo policy would be "patient and peaceful." Jeremic said that while Serbia and the United States disagreed about the trajectory for Serbia, both nations agreed on the end goals of prosperity, stability, and European integration.

Assembly Speaker Djukic-Dejanovic: Deepening Cooperation

¶10. (SBU) Speaker of the Serbian National Assembly Slavica Djukic-Dejanovic said the coalition parties were united by a commitment to join the EU, improve the lives of citizens, and fight organized crime. Djukic-Dejanovic said that Vice President Biden's visit had opened a new chapter in U.S.-Serbian relations. She said she was grateful for current USAID assistance and welcomed increased cooperation with the U.S. Congress to assist the National

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Assembly as it made reforms. She cited recent parliamentary efforts establishing the Assembly's financial independence from the government, and developing several independent bodies working on anti-corruption, citizens' rights, and transparency. Djukic-Dejanovic said parliamentary exchanges such as a recent International Visitors Program were useful. She invited Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to visit Serbia and said she would follow up with a formal invitation. In a follow up dinner with several MPs from the American Friendship Caucus, all expressed to Pomeroy a greater interest in fostering stronger relations between the National Assembly and Congress.

Pomeroy's Return to Kraljevo

¶11. (U) On February 20, Congressman Pomeroy traveled to the central Serbian city of Kraljevo, where he and Deputy Chief of Mission Brush had been exchange students in 1973. Together with the mayor, they toured the city and discussed the current local economic climate and potential opportunities for further cooperation.

¶12. (U) Pomeroy then participated in a casual reunion with the Kraljevo host families who had sponsored American students in 1973. In his remarks, which were extensively covered by the national media, Pomeroy stated continued support for bilateral exchanges which fostered greater people to people understanding.

Comment

¶13. (SBU) Representative Pomeroy's visit to Serbia helped to reinforce our message that the United States firmly supported Serbia's EU aspirations, while also encouraging Serbia to find a pragmatic manner to move beyond the issue of Kosovo. The open, positive reception he received from the Government, the Assembly and Serbian citizens showed a growing interest in further engaging with the United States in both governmental and cultural fora. Pomeroy's personal connection to Serbia demonstrated the significant impact of such exchanges, even decades after the first encounter. End Comment.

¶14. (U) This cable was cleared by Representative Pomeroy.
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